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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: NEW FORCES PREVENTED FROM MEETING PRESIDENT

REF: ABIDJAN 00694

Classified By: Poloff Phaedra Gwyn for reason 1.4 b&d

11. (U) On July 4, a delegation of New Forces (NF) soldiers led by Chief-of-Staff General Soumailo Bakayoko was refused entry to the Prime Minister's office (Primature) prior to a scheduled meeting with President Gbagbo. Gbagbo wrote the NF last week, inviting the NF military (FAFN) to meet with him at the presidential palace. According to Commander Adama Kone, spokesperson for the FAFN, the delegation arrived at the Primature at 16:00 where they were to first meet the Minister of Defense. The FAFN were to then proceed next door to the Presidential Palace. Elements from the presidential guard that control the area met the delegation at the gate of the Primature and told the Togolese UN battalion charged with guarding the FAFN that they could not enter with their weapons. In addition, the FAFN, who were unarmed, were told that they would have to remove their stripes. Apparently this was because of the Ivoirian Armed Forces' unwillingness to recognize the FAFN's new military ranks.

12. (C) The Togolese battalion refused to depose their weapons and after some heated discussion the delegation left. Pro-Gbagbo newspapers are reporting that the NF had agreed beforehand that there would be no weapons or military stripes. According to Kone, however, no previous discussions had taken place regarding the terms of the meeting.

13. (C) COMMENT This incident comes on the heels of the two armed forces' failure to reach agreement last week on several key issues during talks held in Bouake (reftel) and on the eve of today's meeting between UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the key actors in the Ivoirian crisis. Again, both parties' unwillingness to compromise led to an incident that could have easily been avoided. END COMMENT.
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